

minute dark hairs: the tail is long and slender, and has small, scattered, bristly hairs, of a brown-black colour.

	In. Lines.		In. Lines.
Length from nose to root of tail . . .	7 0	Length of ear	0 7
of tail	6 6	from nose to ear	1 6
of tarsus	1 3½		

No. 2. Hairs along the centre of the back chiefly black, and but obscurely annulated, near the apex, with deep yellow: towards the sides of the body, and over the haunches, the hairs are more distinctly annulated, and on the sides of the body they are of a pale yellow at the apex: on the under parts the hairs are gray, tipped with dirty yellowish white: the feet are of the same deep purple-brown hue as in the specimen first described.

Habitat, Ascension Island, Atlantic Ocean, (July.)

These two animals not only differ in the colour of the fur, one being of a grizzled brownish colour, and the other black, but there is a considerable difference in the texture of the fur. In the black specimen, the fur is very soft and glossy, and the long hairs, which are abundant, are very slender. In the brown specimen, the fur is of a harsher nature, the long hairs are not so abundant, but longer, and less slender. On the other hand, they agree in size, dentition, the length of the head, tarsus, and ears, and differ but in a trifling degree (about three lines,) in the length of the tail.

Upon comparing the Ascension Island specimens with *M. Rattus*, I find that, although in size they are about one third less, yet the teeth precisely agree, not only in form, but in size. The relative proportions of the head, ears, and tarsi, also agree. Besides the general colouring of the fur, they both differ in having the hairs of the feet uniformly purple-black, those in *Mus Rattus* being much paler, and even whitish, on the toes. In the character of the fur, there is much difference. The long silky hairs, which are so conspicuous in *Mus Rattus*, are replaced, in the black specimen, by hairs which are scarcely to be distinguished from the ordinary fur; and in the other specimen, although rather longer and more distinct, they are short, compared with those of the black rat.

"The specimen which has a black, and glossy fur, frequents the short coarse grass near the summit of the island, where the common mouse likewise occurs. It is often seen running about by day, and was found in numbers, when the island was first colonized by the English, a few years since. The other, and browner coloured variety, lives in the out-houses near the sea-beach, and feeds

chiefly on the offal of the turtles, slaughtered for the daily food of the inhabitants. If the settlement were destroyed, I feel no doubt that this latter variety would be compelled to migrate from the coast. Did it originally descend from the summit? and, in the case just supposed, would it retreat there? and, if so, would its black colour return? It must, however, be observed, that the two localities are separated from each other by a space, some miles in width, of bare lava and ashes. Does the summit of Ascension, an island so immensely remote from any continent, and the summit itself surrounded by a broad fringe of desert volcanic soil, possess a small quadruped, peculiar to itself? Or, more probably, has this new species been brought, by some ship, from some unknown quarter of the world? Or, I am again tempted to ask, as I did in the case of the Galapagos rat, has the common English species been changed, by its new habitation, into a strongly marked variety?"—D.

Mr. Darwin seems to have foreseen the difficult problem which these two rats have furnished, and although I have spent much time in studying the Muridæ, I must confess I have been exceedingly puzzled by the animals in question. It appears as if the brown, and black rats, (*M. decumanus*, and *M. Rattus*), and likewise the common mouse, (*M. Musculus*),* all of which follow man in his peregrinations, and which, to a certain degree, are dependent upon man, and may therefore be termed semi-domestic animals; like *really* domestic animals, are subject to a greater degree of variation than those species which hold themselves aloof from him.

Upon the whole then I have determined to describe the two Ascension Island specimens as one species, and as varieties of the *Mus Rattus*, but with a mark of doubt, since I do not possess sufficient materials for a rigorous examination, having, in fact, but one skin of each variety, and neither skull nor skeleton. I have also applied the name of *insularis*, to designate this variety or species, whichever it may be, for, supposing it be not a distinct species, it is so marked a variety, that a name for it is desirable.

* The great Bandicoot rat of India, (*Mus giganteus*, of Hardwicke,) ought, perhaps, to be added to the species above enumerated; and I strongly suspect several catalogued species will prove but varieties of this animal.